

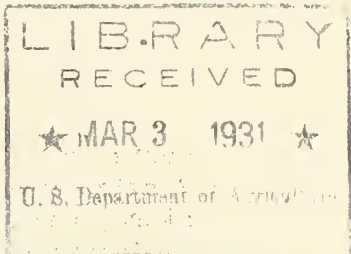
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PUTTING WEATHER REPORTS TO WORK



A radio talk by Mr. Arthur J. DeMars, meteorologist, Weather Bureau, delivered through Station WRC and 39 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, February 19, 1931.

This talk today, folks, will be of interest to those among you who frequent the forests either in work or play as well as to lumber men, farmers, railroad men and others. Some of you may not realize the importance of just one act of carelessness with fire in the forests, and why it is that the United States Forest Service and the State forest agencies make so great an effort to keep forest fires under control. If we go back a few years in the history of forest fires in this country we find that tremendous losses of life and property have been caused by forest fires burning unattended. To recall a few of these great conflagrations to mind, we have but to cite the great Peshtigo forest fire of 1871 in which fifteen hundred settlers lost their lives; the Hinckley, Minnesota, disaster of 1894 which caused the death of 418 men, women, and children; the great Idaho fire of 1910 and the Cloquet, Minnesota, disaster of 1918. In 1887, the smoke from the great forest fires in the Pacific Northwest interfered with navigation far out to sea.

One of the most serious problems that the United States Forest Service, forestry associations and owners of timber areas have to contend with is the annual losses from fires in the forests. The Weather Bureau cooperates with these organizations by conducting a project known as the Fire Weather Warning Service. This project is comparatively new, and intensive study is being made of the conditions favorable to forest fires, and how they may be combatted.

Weather forecasts have been used for many years as an aid in the protection of forests from fire. At first only the daily forecasts were used, but since 1916 special forecasts have been issued in the interest of protection of forests. These forecasts are issued during the fire weather season. In order to give the most efficient forecast service possible, the forest areas of the country have been divided into seven fire-weather districts, five of them being in the west, one in the middle west and one in the northeast. Each district is in charge of a well trained meteorologist who has general supervision of the work in his district.

The meteorologist in charge of the fire weather warning district supplements the regional forecast received from the forecast district center by reports from substations located in the forest areas. This arrangement gives him the benefit of the judgment of the district forecaster before he issues his own forecasts and advices. With the basic forecast before him, he considers the individual reports from the substations, applies his own intimate knowledge of the peculiarities of each section and issues amplified advices and warnings for the different forest sections. These fore-

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casts are given in terms designed to be as helpful as possible to the Forest Service in appraising the fire hazard, and consist of forecasts of temperature, and rainfall, wind direction and velocity, thunderstorms, and humidity; and a statement concerning the relative degree of expected fire hazard. The forecasts and warnings issued in this manner are of the greatest assistance to all forest agencies and logging operators in preventing fires from starting and gaining headway.

When the officials and Rangers of the Forest Service and fire wardens of other agencies receive these forecasts, they pass them along to their field men and to loggers, by telephone and other rapid means of communication. Immediate steps are then taken by members of the Forest Services and by the operators of logging activities to shut down camps or to assign two or three times the usual number of men kept on guard to put out all fires, however small, that may start in the forest. Many of the lumber companies do not wait for warnings of high fire hazard to be issued before they concern themselves about fire prevention, but call regularly at the offices of the Forest Service and forest control agencies in order to obtain information relative to coming conditions so that they may plan the work of burning slashings at the most opportune time. As lightning is one of the greatest causes of fire in the forests of the Pacific coast states, the forest control agencies and loggers are much concerned in the forecasts of thunderstorms.

In connection with the fire weather warning service in California, a fire weather field unit consisting of a truck equipped with radio receivers, meteorological instruments and accommodations for an operating personnel is operated in cooperation with the United States Forest Service, and the California State Division of Forestry. This unit is directed by a central agency to proceed to fires, where the meteorologist in charge of the unit sets up the radio equipment and copies the broadcasts of observations and forecasts transmitted from the Naval Radio Station at San Francisco. From these reports a detailed weather map is made, the regional forecasts amplified, and specialized information relative to coming conditions of weather, temperature wind, and humidity, is given to the fire fighters.

The Weather Bureau has no control over the forests nor over forest protection but cooperation with the United States Forest Service, State Conservation Departments, and other agencies in their efforts to protect the forest lands.

On next Tuesday, folks, I will be back again to tell you about aviation forecasts.